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1 of 3 SCS

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Charles Garry Visits Jonestown:

'I Have Been To Paradise'

On Nov. 6 Peoples Temple welcomed Charles Garry, who represents Peoples Temple as its attorney. Garry has recently returned from a visit to the temple's agricultural project in Guyana, Jonestown (so named by the Guyanese government). He had much information to share.

"Last Monday night I was on a talk show," he began, "and I had the opportunity to tell that I had seen and I had been in paradise. I saw it. It's there for anybody to see, and I'm hopeful that in the next few day or weeks we'll be able to have a documentary, which everyone will be able to see.

"I saw community where there is no such thing as racism. No one feels the color of his skin, whether he's Black, brown, yellow, red, or white. I also noticed that no one thinks in terms of sex. No one feels superior to anyone else. I don't know of any community in the world today that has been able to solve the problem of male sex supremacy completely. That does not exist in Jonestown.

"I also saw something else: There is no such thing as age-ism. The community is comprised of the little children, the teen-agers, the young adults, the old adults, the senior citizens, all together.

"I have never seen so many happy faces in my life as I did in Jonestown the three days I was there. I want that captured (on film) so that skeptical America will know what it is when you live without fear of the rent being due, and all the other problems we're surrounded by.

"There are some 800 persons or more there now. They've got cottages set up that you just could not believe. I saw sanitation there that I had never seen in any part of the world, except Switzerland. You can eat off the ground."

He went on to speak of the consistently high level of medical care, organized under a doctor who is "thorough, conscientious and dedicated." The medical team has "the latest in medical equipment and books," and "every person who goes to Jonestown is medically thoroughly examined, and charts are prepared." He recalls that he urged Dr. Schacht to start keeping daily, hourly diaries, to put the operation of the medical compound in writing, so that many of our medical schools, and the American Medical Association, can learn from what is being done at Jonestown.

A high point of his talk related to the care of senior citizens, which he said moved him deeply. "All of the senior citizens' cottages are built around the immediate vicinity of the medical compound. Every single morning a member of the medical team knocks on the cottage of the senior citizen and inquires, 'Did anybody have any problem during the night? Do you have any problems here this morning?' Can you imagine the security that the senior citizens feel with this kind of care? I'd like to have a representative from a body here that's trying to improve the lot of senior citizens who are left to be beggars and paupers to see what is going on in Jonestown."

He spoke of the many agricultural projects, including an improvised method of developing feed from protein food grown in Jonestown. The area of Jonestown devoted to raising animals also drew praise. "Those pigpens, as we call them, looked like palaces. Many of the homes that I've seen in America could not measure up to the sanitation, the cleanliness, the spaciousness of the place we call a pigpen." The chickens raised and butchered at the project he called "luscious," and the food generally is "delicate, nourishing, and it's type of food that will make your blood pressure go down; your diabetes will disappear. It's substantial, nourishing food—the kind that will take away the fat you accumulate by the type of food we eat here."

The project as a whole is described as quite developed: a thriving sawmill, generators to meet electrical needs, wells, streets refrigeration. The school is open-air, in a large covered area, with 15 to 20 youngsters in a class.

Teachers are drawn, in part, from "at least 50 people there who have advanced degrees." He spoke of the enthusiastic participation and discussion on the part of all the students, which is something he had not seen here, with the exception of the Oakland Community School.

Does Jonestown lack for entertainment and fun? Not at all. Garry says, "There's this beautiful auditorium, and for three-and-a-half hours I saw the most beautiful entertainment in the world. I've never seen such talent in my life. I saw children from toddlers through about the age of seven putting on a demonstration, with voice, and clapping, and marching, and children six and seven years old getting up and reciting poetry with meaning and gusto. It was just remarkable.

"Why are those people so happy?" he mused again. "They are learning a new social order. They are learning an answer to a better life. When I returned to the States, I told my partners in the office that I had seen paradise. From what I saw there, I would say that the society that is being built in Jonestown is a credit to humanity."

And then, as if to reinforce the amazing description, he added, "This is not propaganda. I'm not a propagandist. I'm a hard-hitting, factual-analysis lawyer. I saw this with my own eyes. I felt it."

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THE
MENDOCINO GRAPEVINE

Jonestown: The Peoples Temple In Guyana

(These are excerpts of a letter from Sharon Amos, who is currently visiting several hundred members of the Peoples Temple at the site of the church's agricultural project in the jungles of Guyana.

The author is a teacher, counselor, and social worker and the article was submitted to the Grapevine by the temple, which formerly had its headquarters in Redwood Valley.)

The road into Jonestown is lined with long rows of banana and citrus trees on either side. The whole vista of serene natural beauty is breathtaking.

Brightly colored butterflies, some startling yellow against the brilliant greens, exotic plants with many types of *leaves*, and all varieties of lush ferns are everywhere. Into the distance are hundreds of crops, as far as the eye can see.

I was amazed by the emotional experience of space, as if I had never looked out and seen land that wasn't marred by garish advertisements of deodorants and razor blades.

I felt as if the more I looked, the more my hectic, anxious mind became lulled into harmony with the natural scenery.

When I arrived at the [illegible] headquarters, I was greeted by hundreds of hugs. It was overwhelming experience to be thousands of miles away, yet given the warmest welcome I had ever known. Everyone looked so happy and relaxed and I felt right at home.

In Jonestown itself, the city dweller adjusts himself easily to a *new way of life. One* is so used to many so-called necessities that you quickly find are addictions that enslave you.

In a natural environment free of tensions, you stop grabbing for food or the TV or a way to "get away from it all." You start to notice that even your body functions differently.

The Jonestowntans characterize newcomers as pulpy swollen-looking people, who actually look *bloated. As people eat* the abundant and fresh natural foods, breathe fresh air, and love a more calm life involved with useful productive work, their bodies begin to firm up, and their skins take on a new glow. They even stand more erect and look more resolved.

At first, I couldn't even recognize familiar people because they looked so different to me.

In this atmosphere that seems like a pioneer village, the most sophisticated things are happening in human development.

And yet not so strange, because I remember getting lost in the anonymous quality of city life in the states. Everything seemed gray to me--the buildings were gray, the streets and the sky were gray--the faces of people in the *buses and walking in the streets* looked cold and impersonal and dehumanized, as if they were afraid to care about anyone.

Here where we can eat together, work together, share our achievements and enjoy common entertainments, those barriers are dissolved. No one is looked up to or down at, we are all co-workers and friends, and resolve our problems together.

Here everyone lives as an equal, and you can communicate without friction. People I used to get into *conflict with--I find* I enjoy their company here. Perhaps competition and inequality set you one against the other.

Jim Jones, the founder-leader of Jonestown is the first to encourage equalitarianism, in the manner in which he stimulates openness and self-expression.

People are *free and in fact* encouraged to speak up and share their analyses and criticisms of every aspect of the community's *life. They find* that many of their suggestions are implemented immediately. There is a great deal of self-analysis also, as people receive much support along with structure, and do not feel their personal identity is threatened or that they will be rejected.

Building what is a genuine grassroots democracy is one of the most exciting challenges we face; and the results, even on a short-range basis, are an amazement to us.

In both our grammar and high schools, we are finding that very few young people educated in the United States have been helped to *think through problems of reason.* Young people who have appeared indifferent to education, are often those who never felt they had the ability to approach ideas analytically, or that anyone would listen.

This is true for others as well, and in our classes, planning meetings, and everyday experience, people of all ages are encouraged to think and express their viewpoints. This atmosphere stimulates dialogues that open whole new areas of study.

All kinds of study groups are *cropping up, with teachers from* all backgrounds: labor leaders, college-educated persons, and workers, as well as people developing a high level of achievement in newly-discovered abilities.

Our doctor, educated through the Temple, is finding we can restore neglected bodies as well as neglected minds.

He is picking up on conditions that were not previously treated, such as female infections that have plagued women for years. In some cases, they just didn't have the money to receive proper treatment.

Jonestown's medical clinic is modern-equipped, and staffed with many nurses and two nurse practitioners as well as the doctor.

Work also has a new meaning here. Physical work is honored rather than demeaned and one can achieve a balance of physical and mental work never before possible, since many tasks are shared.

In the United States, the demands of industry and bureaucracy necessarily kept people pegholed in certain areas, hence also alienated from one another.

There is no such need to be specialized here, and one can become proficient in *many things* and also lead a balanced life.

Even the government of the village of Jonestown is more equitable, being based upon the demonstration of genuine leadership qualities.

Leadership in U.S. society is generally oriented to what are considered privileged work positions, which is too often rooted in privileged economic or racial status.

Here no such arbitrary advantages exist. Anyone who is capable can assume leadership in the fields, *in the garden, the kitchen, in construction work, or in the schools* and thus become one of the representatives of the central government.

Jan is a good example of a leader who has emerged from the position of a worker into a fine supervisor of a field work crew into a leader *governing the people* and helping them to solve problems.

Jan used to live with me in Ukiah. She was a local Indian young woman with no sense of self-worth. Because she was Indian she was treated as a no-do-well with no intelligence or capacity to acquire an education or assume any kind of leadership.

She was passive and fearful, *often depressed, and felt* hopeless about any kind of meaningful future. She also was obese and her face was unexpressive.

Jan has lived in Jonestown for several years now and is like a new person. She has become an acknowledged expert in citrus production, and has learned to supervise work teams in our citrus beds, often with people with more *education than she but who had* fewer skills than she has acquired here.

She is now a beautiful woman, *confident, and often leads* meetings of the entire central government. She is warm and expressive, and people look to her as an example of accomplishment and strength.

The construction crews are so smoothly coordinated that it is common for one or two complete houses to go up in a single day.

The young people have organized themselves into a vital force to be of help wherever they are needed. They are working on all kinds of projects, such as dramas and debates, and Big Brother and Big Sister programs for some of the younger children.

People also have every opportunity to creatively structure the environment in which they and their children live and work, thus many practical innovations are being made, and equipment is being designed to meet human needs and for the maximum possible use.

The nursery is such a project--babies have cribs where they can see each other and communicate with each other. The cribs are handmade from beautiful indigenous woods. The mothers and other nursery workers that care for the infants and toddlers give them a great deal of individual love and attention and all of the children have their needs met without exception. Stimulating toys and *mobiles* are handmade for them so that they live a very happy life.

In fact, the residents of Jonestown *generally* have an air of happiness and confidence about them that I would not have believed possible from just a change of environment.

This is not a materialistic life, in terms of all the luxuries and expensive appliances one might be used to in the United States.

But everything which is needed materially is provided, and there is the security of knowing that every facility and piece of equipment is intended to benefit the people, and that everything we build *has been planned and created by* the people who will be most involved in its use.

We especially value living in a cooperative society, with a leader who is working day and night to preserve our freedom to survive and flourish.

All in all, I can sincerely say that it is a very exciting experience to be a pioneer in Jonestown. We are *building a new society* with new goals.

I learned a great deal in the United States but because of the *emphasis on property values and* lack of shared goals, I was lost for many of my 41 years.

I searched for years and years, going out on tangents looking for momentary pleasures. Only when I found the Peoples Temple and a commitment to practical humanitarian goals did I find a direction in my life.

Jonestown makes the search complete because in Jonestown the principles I came to believe in have become realities.